

Animal Industry Drafts Avian Influenza Surveillance and Response Plan

Avian Influenza (AI) is a disease of increasing worldwide importance with growing implications as a human disease threat. And the potential for low pathogenic varieties of AI to mutate to highly pathogenic strains, affecting domestic poultry, is significant. In response to the increasing threat posed by Avian Influenza, the Utah Department of Agriculture and Food has drafted a comprehensive Avian Influenza Surveillance and Response Plan.

The following are basic talking points regarding what measures are being taken to protect Utah poultry and the public from Avian Influenza.

- Utah does not have Avian Influenza in its bird population.
- And there are no cases in the US of the “high-path” strain of AI that can infect humans.
- The Department of Agriculture and Food (UDAF) works closely with the poultry industry and the Division of Wildlife Resources to prevent the introduction of AI.
- State and federal meat inspectors are on-sight at packing plants, looking for signs of infected birds.
- State and private practice veterinarians are on alert for birds showing signs of bird flu (diarrhea, nasal discharge, decreased egg production, lack of energy and appetite, etc.) or any dead or dieing birds.
- We have two Animal Diagnostic Laboratories (Logan, Nephi) that are specially equipped to test dead or dieing birds that might have Avian Influenza.
- The UDAF has just completed an Avian Influenza Surveillance and Response Plan that is a comprehensive document that spells out what we should do to prevent AI from entering the state. It also spells out what we would do if we get Avian Influenza in Utah.
- It requires:
 - Mandatory testing of select birds in commercial bird flocks.
 - Any birds brought into the state...either for commercial or domestic purposes...must have a health certificate issued by a vet. from the previous location.
 - Employees of commercial growers cannot own pet birds, or handle birds from other areas.
- We offer public outreach to educate owners of backyard flocks how to protect their animals.
- The consequences of an outbreak would be severe to the industry that generates \$100 million a year to our economy, and employs hundreds of people.
- The introduction of AI into Utah could possibly come through wild migrating birds, rather than the commercial poultry population.
- It's likely that a wild bird would come in contact with a commercial poultry farm and deposit manure in a pen, or have direct physical contact with the domestic bird.

- In 1995 an AI outbreak occurred in Utah when migrating waterfowl came in contact with infected poultry near Mexico City. The waterfowl then made their way to a central Utah lake located near a turkey farm.
- Two million Turkeys were affected. 25% of them died.
- More information about AI is available at:
http://www.aphis.usda.gov/lpa/pubs/fsheet_faq_notice/fs_ahai.html

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